

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE CITY OF MERIDIAN, IDAHO'S DOWNTOWN

OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

Initial Pointe will create a 21st century neighborhood on a twenty plus acre property within and adjacent to the Meridian Downtown Core. This project will become a prototype for future downtown redevelopment and address many of the goals and values of the community. In addition, Initial Pointe will serve as a focal point for future regional transportation opportunities.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE – WOZMAZ DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

- Harold Moniz

Facilitated the entire process and provided exceptional guidance throughout including the SWOT analysis. He interviewed the Mayor and took notes during the interview of the City Planner. He participated in the interview of the Treasure Valley Regional Transit as part of the tour. Harold prepared the PowerPoint presentation, contributed to the strategy section and made final edits on the written report.

- Hank Ebert

Took notes during interviews and participated in interviews with Treasure Valley Regional Transit and bike shop owner. He prepared the initial written 'blueprint' to begin the general discussion and participated in all discussions and development of the plan, including the SWOT analysis. Hank prepared the Strategy section for the written report.

- Becky Bryant

Interviewed City Planner and took notes during the interview of the Mayor. Becky participated in the interview of Treasure Valley Regional Transit and the bike shop owner. She also contributed to the SWOT and all the discussions in developing the plan and presentation. Becky prepared the Project Description for the written report.

- Regan Leon

Took notes during interviews and participated in the interviews of Treasure Valley Regional Transit and bike shop owner. He contributed to the SWOT analysis and all discussions dealing with the development of the plan and presentations. Regan prepared the Implementation section for the written report.

- Gary Hanes

Took photos of downtown Meridian during the tour and took notes during the interview with the Mayor and City Planner. Gary interviewed Councilman Charlie Rountree of Meridian and Sean Wardle of Meridian Development Corporation regarding the 22 acre site owned by Union Pacific. He contributed to the SWOT analysis and all discussions leading to the development of a plan and the presentation. Gary prepared the Problem Statement and Organization Structure portions for the written report.

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROGRAM

As part of the planning process, we identified several core policies and strategies from adopted City and MDC documents. Priority policies and strategies identified by our team include the following.

2002 Comprehensive Plan:

Goal II; Objective B; Action 3. Acquire existing rail corridor for future transit system between Boise and Nampa.

Goal IV; Objective D; Action 6. Preserve railroad corridor for future pathway and light rail uses.

Goal IV; Objective D; Action 7. Develop incentives for high-density development along major transportation corridors to support public transportation system.

Goal V; Objective A; Action 15. Allow density transfers in exchange for school sites, open space dedications or for access easements to linear open space corridors, which contain bicycle and pedestrian pathway systems.

2005 Downtown Meridian Transportation Management Plan

Transit Village (High Density) (Meridian Road to Baltic Place - Bower Avenue to Broadway Avenue). This district will focus on opportunities related to its position along the future transit line planned for the railroad corridor. The Transit Village will develop as a business and cultural hub to the entire Treasure Valley. Government, professional services, higher education, high density residential, and retail linked to these uses will be

emphasized. This area will be a major regional destination. Park-and-ride land use will be discouraged. Public transit stops for local buses will be designed into the district to strengthen its centrality as a regional hub.

Meridian Development Corporation - Meridian Marketing Strategy

Downtown development will emphasize seven key strengths:

1. Social retail at street level
2. Cultural, continuing education and recreational (“livability”) facilities
3. Offices for businesses that serve Meridian residents and economic strengths
4. Highly livable urban homes
5. A Treasure Valley business/transit village along the rail corridor
6. A strong, highly visible civic presence
7. A circulation system for cars, bikes and pedestrians that makes Downtown a great place to be and to visit

Transit Corridor District – High Density Uses

Community Values

- Family Friendly/Family Oriented
- Emphasize the significance of Meridian’s central geographic location and agricultural heritage
- Identity as a hub or heart of the Treasure Valley – a place to live, work, play, learn, and ride
- Sustainability
- Connected within the community and throughout the region

Team Vision

Initial Pointe is a 21st Century community that is family-oriented and acts as a connector to the downtown and greater Treasure Valley region. It is sustainable in all senses, celebrates life and heritage and will create a legacy project for the future of downtown Meridian.

The Team conducted a S-W-O-T analysis as part of the planning process. This analysis is summarized below.

Strengths (Internal)

- Access – close to City Hall, railroad, downtown core, community, and region
- Proposed development will enhance existing and desired downtown uses
- Large, relatively undeveloped site presents clean slate
- Wireless broadband, other infrastructure and proximities to services enhances business incubation

Weaknesses (Internal)

- Undeveloped access and poor infrastructure
- “Through” traffic versus “to” traffic, lack of public transit, lack of cohesive non-motorized connections
- Proximity to railroad and other potentially incompatible light industrial uses
- Lack of downtown identity
- Potential brownfield site
- Cost of relocating existing tenant businesses and resulting job losses

Opportunities (External)

- Tipping point for downtown redevelopment
- Develop centralized transportation hub for downtown and regional destination
- Focal point for entrepreneurial activities as well as culture, art, heritage and learning
- 21st Century prototype development

Threats (External)

- Difficulties and delays with property acquisition from railroad owner
- City and other regulatory agency approvals, layering and timing of approvals
- Financing issues and return on investment
- Uncertain community support
- Business associations weak or disorganized

- Market demand for urban housing in downtown core and acceptance of higher densities and height

INITIAL POINTE – THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Initial Pointe is a 22 acre gateway development in the heart of Downtown Meridian. The site provides a mixture of opportunities to live, work, play, learn and ride. The centrally located site provides linkages to many downtown and adjacent amenities such as theatres, City Hall, a future conference center, Farmer's Markets and the local water park.

The Initial Pointe concept was developed after numerous meetings with local partners and the community. Our public outreach program included local schools (elementary and high school), PTA, downtown businesses, Federal, State, County and local governments, senior service organizations, non-profits and the Arts Council.

Initial Pointe consists of the following programs and related components:

Parks: A hierarchy of green and hardscaped open spaces, for active and passive programming. Water features would be incorporated where appropriate. Children's play areas and programming would be emphasized. Urban agriculture and community pea-patches would be emphasized and incorporated into the design of the site. An amphitheater would be located between the light rail transit center and hotel for events and community celebrations. A linear green corridor would be located adjacent to the bike path within the railroad right of way, connecting downtown Meridian to Nampa and Boise.

Neighborhood Social Retail and Services: An urban market would be located along Broadway for ease of access. Coffee shops, bakeries, restaurants, gift shops and other neighborhood retail would be located adjacent to the light rail transit center and along Main Street and Broadway Avenue fronting the underground parking garage. Artist galleries and live/work units would be located in this area to highlight local artists and create evening activities. Other professional offices, social services and non-profit spaces would be located on top of the underground parking structure. Programming for business incubation and micro-retail would be incorporated into desirable locations.

Housing: Vertical high-density housing in the east portion of the site will provide integrated market and affordable units. Residential units will be a mix of townhouses, studios, 1, 2, and 3 bedroom units. Housing for senior and other special needs will be programmed into the unit mix. Rental and for sale units will be provided.

Underground parking for units will be constructed with limited guest parking at grade.

Public Transportation HUBS: Phase one would construct the bus transit center. This hub will provide a southern anchor for the public transit system within the downtown. Public parking would be available at the underground parking garage. Future shuttles or trolleys circulating through the downtown could leverage the bus transit center. This transit center would provide future connections from outlying areas into the future light rail system. A linear green corridor would be located adjacent to the bike path within the railroad right of way, connecting downtown Meridian to Nampa and Boise. Phase two would construct the light rail transit center. This hub will be the regional stop for a light rail system connecting downtown Meridian to Nampa and Boise.

Hotel: A 5 star hotel would anchor this development. The hotel would provide conference rooms, catering, top floor restaurant and lounge offering 360 degree views. The hotel would help program the amphitheater space and be complimentary to the retail businesses within the project.

Wozmaz Gallery: This existing iconic structure would be renovated for reuse as a microbrewery pub combined with artist live/work spaces. Design of the site would accommodate and enhance the existing farmers market to potentially provide year round covered space and incorporate more arts and crafts for sale. This site would be the bridge across Main Street linking the new City Hall campus to this project.

Green Sustainable Components: All buildings would be LEED certified and provide roof-top gardens and solar panels. Natural ventilation and natural lighting would be emphasized. District energy systems utilizing geothermal resources would be evaluated for efficiencies. Rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling would be implemented for toilet flushing, water features and irrigation. Anaerobic digesters and composting programs will reduce solid waste to a minimum.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Several components of the Initial Pointe and the Wozmaz Center development are eligible for tax credit financing programs. The entire Initial Pointe development acts as a catalyst for revitalization of Meridian. New Market tax credits are available for projects that are in designated distressed areas that act as a catalyst for revitalization. Senior and other affordable housing in the residential element of Initial Pointe is eligible for Low Income Housing tax credits, if greater than 50% the units are affordable to families earning 80% AMI or less. Solar-Energy tax credits are an option since a significant focus of this development is achieving a high LEED certification. Finally, Historic tax credits are available for restoration of historic structures such as the Wozmaz Granary.

Local sources of financing include HOME funding, Idaho Housing & Finance Association and Idaho-Nevada CDFI, Inc. These organizations provide financing for community development and economic development projects that create jobs, revitalize designated distressed areas and provide for low- and moderate-income areas and households. Meridian receives CDBG funding. Besides conventional financing, HUD Project mortgage insurance would be available.

Other resources for financing include foundations. Union Pacific Foundation seeks to enhance communities in which their employees live. In addition, they support transit-oriented development. Initial Pointe is both transit oriented and Meridian residents include current and former employees of Union Pacific. The Kresgee Foundation funding priorities include health, environment, community development, arts & culture, education and human services. Initial Pointe addresses each of the funding priorities listed. Lastly, the Collins Foundation Principals' Partnership provides community-based grants related to education. A partnership, between the Boys & Girls Club and the Wozmaz Center, which provides at-risk youth the opportunity to explore various art media in a non-threatening environment, could seek funding from the Collins Foundation.

Critical to the implementation of this plan is the partnerships created with local and regional institutions and organizations. Educational institutions can play an important role in our success. Boise State University Small Business Development Center can provide technical assistance and information to the artist/entrepreneurs living in Initial Pointe and the Wozmaz Center. University of Idaho Architecture & landscape Architecture programs can gain real-life experience that can enhance the education of the students.

The Meridian Arts Council can provide guidance for the publicly accessible art in Initial Pointe, as well as assistance with the development of the Gallery in the Wozmaz Center. The result will be an enhancement of the existing public art in Meridian.

Partnership with a specialized real estate developer for the Wozmaz Center is a benefit. ArtSpace is a non profit organization that creates, fosters & preserves affordable space for artists & arts organizations by developing real estate and providing consulting, the goal on which is to build community.

A partnership with national government agencies helps focus the elements of the development. Strong communication with the EPA and DEQ are important due to the likelihood of encountering the need for brownfield clean up. The affordable housing element could obtain HUD assistance for construction.

Five Actions Required to Make Plan A Reality

1. Town hall meetings
 - a. Showcasing Site Plan
 - b. Making refinements and adjustments
2. Approval of Master Plan by City Council
3. Congressional Action process for property acquisition. Enter into long term lease.
 - a. Partnership with City
4. Financing packages developed
5. Start final design and construction.